

Department of Fire Services

Special Operations Division



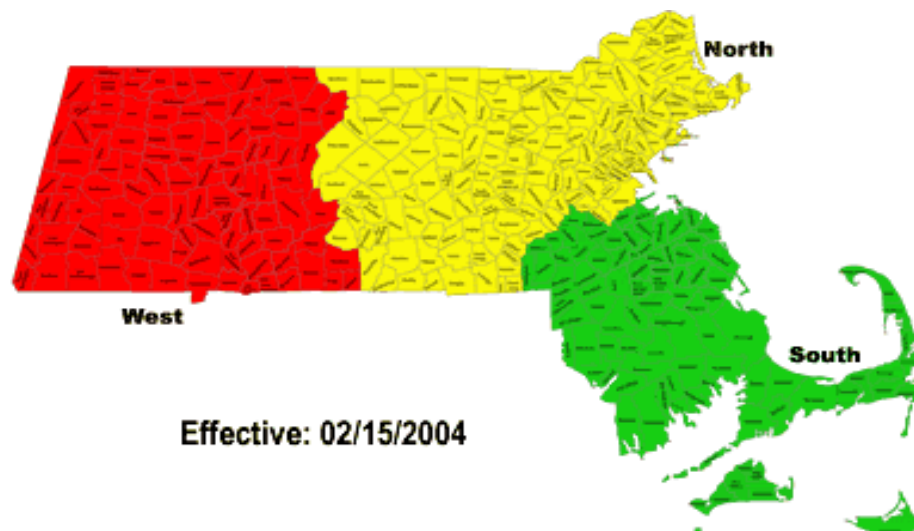
2004 Annual Report

Introduction

This is the second annual report of the Department of Fire Services Special Operations Division and reflects unit operations for the calendar year 2004. The Special Operations Division incorporates the Incident Support Unit, Incident Support Trailer, and Rehab services. The past year we have made many changes to the program all based on the experiences we have had and from the comments we have received. The Special Operations group has had the response areas moved and the number of response areas reduced from four to three. The map below indicates each of the response areas for all activations and responses of the Special Operations team and equipment.

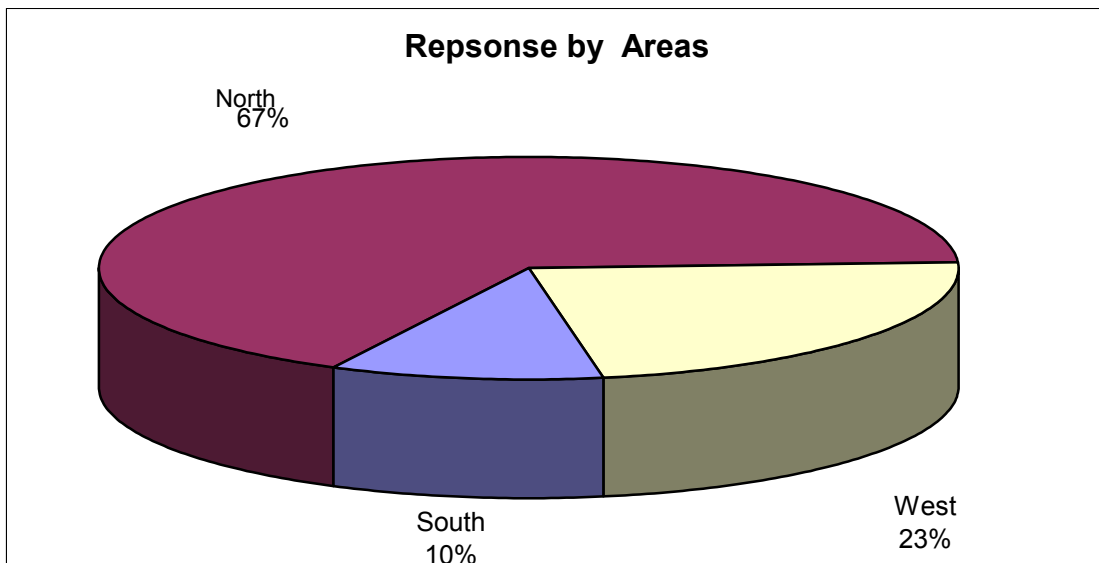
With the all the changes in equipment and the demand for service comes a greater need for technical support at each and every planned and emergency event. From the current operations group we have established eight members to become part of the technical support group in addition to their regular team responsibilities. This highly trained team meets on a monthly basis to enhance their training on specific equipment and operations and for technical interaction with other vehicles and equipment. Each time the Incident Support Unit is activated one of these people responds and works with the other team members to deliver the services that are unique to each event. This has proven to be a very positive move and we hope to increase the technical team size as the responses evolve.

This past year the contract for building the new REHAB truck was awarded to Wolf Coach in Auburn with delivery of February 2005. The new vehicle on a commercial GMC truck chassis is built for a quicker response and designed for all types of our typical New England weather. The vehicle will seat nineteen people inside with additional room in outside areas on both sides of the truck. The entire self supporting vehicle has a misting system on board complete with clean water, a 20 Kw generator capable of running all HVAC units, tower lighting and appliances. The appliances consist of refrigerators, ice machines, humidifier, supplemental wall heaters, and fifteen inch flat screen TVs tied to internal equipment.



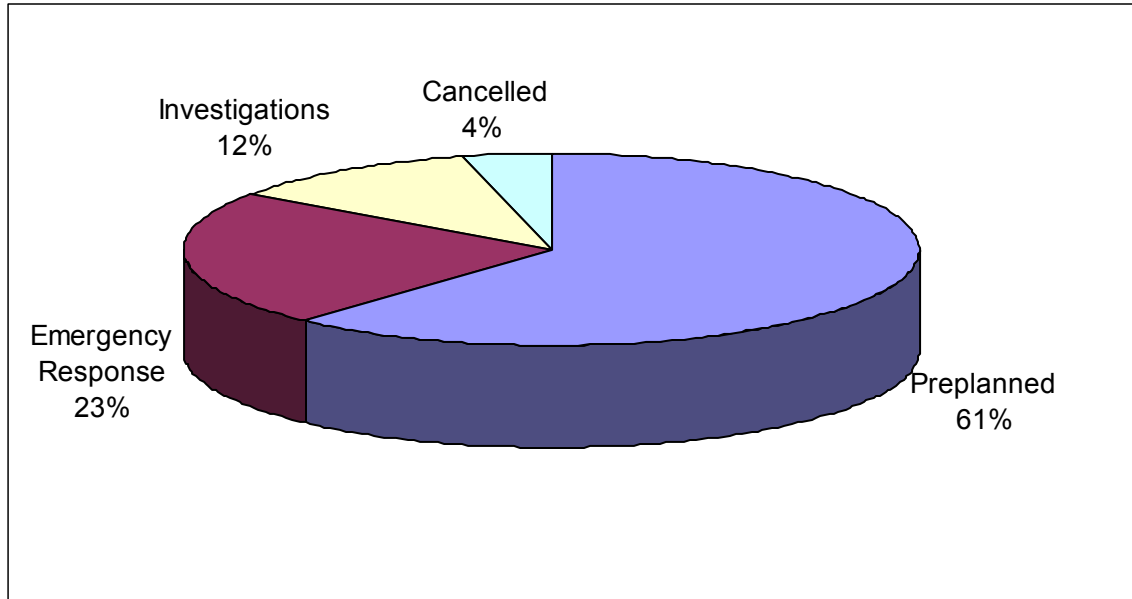
Responses

The Special Operations Response Team and vehicles have once again had a very active and productive year. As with any program we have learned from our experiences and have made changes to policy, procedures and equipment that reflect these experiences. The teams have been activated a total of forty times during the year. We have responded to all regions of the state in all types of weather, including some of the warmest and coldest days we have seen in New England in a long time. The chart below reflects the activations to the three special operations response areas. This year we provided a response for the Red Sox World Series Games as well as the Red Sox Parade in Boston. A great deal of preplanning and support was given for the overall public safety and the operation of the Unified Command Post at MEMA for the Democratic National Convention.



Types of Responses

We have responded to a variety of events that are reflected in chart below. These incidents have been classified into four categories.



Fire Scenes:

Incident commanders at both structural and wild land fires have found the services of the incident support unit to be a valuable resource. We have now seen several communities inquiring of the Incident Commander about the activation of the ISU at a predetermined alarm as part of their running cards.

Fire Investigations:



The unit has been called to support investigators from the local fire service and the State Police investigators assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal at both fatal fires and serious multiple alarm fires. The most common uses have been for interviews, briefings of all investigation staff, photocopy, video-tape review, phone, pager and fax services.

Planned Events:

This past year we have seen a tremendous increase in the request and subsequent set up and operation at scheduled events. The ISU was once again used as a unified command post at the Holyoke St Patrick's Day parade for all Public Safety Agencies. These agencies included police, fire, local EMS, State Police and parade officials. The unit was staged at the beginning of the parade and several emergency calls (medicals and security) were controlled from this point. Having all the agencies around one table made for a very smooth operation at the incidents.

The vehicle was also requested and utilized as a unified command post for a major event at the Fitchburg airport. Once again communications were provided for all agencies from security, EMS, fire and law enforcement units to the unified command post.

We have continued our support to the Boston Marathon, Head of the Charles Regatta, the City of Cambridge for the Boston Fourth of July Fireworks and Concert, as well as many smaller venues.



Operations & Liaison Chiefs

Two of the key components of our Special Operations Response Team are the Operations Chiefs and the Liaison Chiefs.

The Operations Chiefs are chiefs that work for and represent the State Fire Marshal at incidents where the unit has been deployed. Their role is to direct and facilitate Special Operations as needed by the local Incident Commander. These chiefs have been selected to represent the three ISU response districts.

All Liaison Chiefs serve as the liaison between the local Incident Commander and the Special Operations Group. The Liaison Chiefs have had the opportunity to meet and go over expected roles and responsibilities at training sessions conducted this past year. Each Fire District has the responsibility to choose Liaison Chiefs to fill this important role.

Training

Training continues to be a key component to responding to the needs of each incident. Each of the three response teams has in district (response district) training a minimum of four times a year. We have redesigned the format that training takes and will be increasing the number of times each team gets training on an annual basis. The Tech team will be meeting on a monthly basis to go over any changes and to continue to map out the future in both team training and response capabilities.

Types of Support

Some of the types of support we have been able to provide at these responses are as follows:

- Communications (linking of radio frequencies and provide additional portable radios)
- Down linking of State Police Air wing in Digital format
- Still and Video recording of incident scenes
- Staging area
- Platform for Unified Command at events
- Mapping of Incident scenes with hourly updating and printing of same

- Obtaining other services and materials needed on scene
- Assisting with formalizing a command structure for short and long term operations
- Providing ICS identification vests
- Cellular phone service
- On scene faxing
- Private, quiet environmentally controlled meeting area for interviews, briefings and planning
- Media coordination and drafting of press releases
- On scene copying and laminating
- Incident documentation

Service to the Communities

At each of these incident responses we have been very successful in maintaining our original goal of being a service to communities when needed. We have and always will maintain a support role and leave the command and control of incidents up to the local incident commander. The Operation's and Liaison chiefs work directly with the incident commander.

Special Operations Team

The compliment of over 50 staff members have proven to work very well within the organizational structure originally designed. Unfortunately during the year we have lost team members who had a great deal of knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment to the program. These members have respectfully stepped down to work on other programs for the fire service. It is our hope to fill the positions in the coming year. Interested parties are encouraged to frequent the DFS web site for job postings.

The Future

The future of the Special Operations continues to grow. The request for services, the upgrade of materials and equipment continue to keep us busy. We have been and are still committed to providing a support service to the fire service of the Commonwealth. It is hoped that with continued funding the technology aspect of the vehicle as well as the staff will continue to grow and meet the needs of those we serve.

One of the biggest challenges we have today is still the ever-changing technology not only in the vehicles supported by DFS but also in the local communities. Radio frequencies and private line tones change on a weekly basis throughout the fire service. As more money is made available we are seeing more communities upgrade their radio equipment and in many cases changing radio frequencies. We would like to encourage communities to notify the Special Operations Office at DFS when they are making such changes so we can have our equipment ready to assist them.

The Special Operations Division of the Department of Fire Services web site will be updated on a regular basis with any changes, responses and photos. We would encourage people to visit the Department of Fire Services web site not only for news of the Special Operations group but for all divisions within the Department of Fire Services as utilize this tool to keep up to date on changes that effect the fire service, and programs that are available to them. You can visit the web site by going to www.state.ma/dfs

Goals for 2005

Some of our goals for 2005 are as listed below:

- Continue to purchase, install and upgrade equipment as the fire service and technology changes
- Receive, train and put into service the new REHAB truck
- Develop and deliver to the fire service a new Special Operations orientation program
- Continue to validate and expand databases that are kept on the vehicle for on scene use.
- Working under a grant we will upgrade Radio consoles in the Incident Support Unit

- Provide technical support to the Chiefs Field Communications Units during training and operations

Mission Statement

To promote and deliver exceptional operational support to the operations of the fire service within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by providing professional, efficient, high quality support services to the local incident commander in a timely and proactive manner.

Fire Service Support

The importance of the support and commitment we have received from the fire service across the Commonwealth cannot be overstated. The success of this program is a tribute to the tremendous cooperation and commitment from departments that we have been able to provide service to, and most importantly from Chiefs and departments that have staff that also work as part of the Special Operations group.

Contacting us

To request activation of any of the Special Operations resources 24 hours a day seven days a week please call the Communications Office at Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency at 508-820-2000. A color flyer is can be printed and posted from the DFS web site.

For scheduled events or general questions please call the Special Operations Office at the Department of Fire Services at 978-567-3171.